

School Governing Board in the Management of Senior High Schools in Cape Coast, Ghana

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Abstract

A qualitative research design utilizing a phenomenological approach was conducted to examine the readiness and role of school governing boards in the management of senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis. Data were collected from purposively selected school board chairpersons through a semi-structured interview protocols. Data collected were analyzed using the methodological schema of description-reduction-horizontalization-interpretation that enabled the grouping of recurring themes. Findings reported in the study revealed that there the readiness of board members to assume board duties was not clearly evidenced in respect of the selection, orientation, training and capacity building of board members. The study findings also revealed that the board members perceived their role conceptualization as trustees and exercised power through team work to take decisions that focus on student academic achievement. key recommendations for practice included the Ghana Education Service and the education directorates ensuring that school boards organize orientation and continuous professional development and capacity building programmes for its members to increase their readiness to function on the school board.

Key words: school management, school board, stakeholder engagement, student achievement

1.0 Introduction

Management of educational institutions entails decisions on how human and material resources are utilized to attain educational goals. Such decisions involve the identification of proper coordination of efficient practices to meet learning outcomes. More specifically, management of educational institutions focus on how to ensure learning takes place under four key conditions (Amakyi, 2017). The first condition addresses decisions on how to assure the presence of a safe and secured environment. The second condition focuses decisions on having the full complement of staff who adopt appropriate pedagogy to enact approved curriculum. The third condition is about decisions that address how to acquire teaching and learning resources. The fourth condition is about decisions on how to harness human capital in the school community. According to Bush (2007), deciding on how to attain the aims of education is at the heart of educational management. Bush further opines that such decisions are not taken by individuals in isolation, that is, the school head and the management team, but rather in collaboration with other stakeholders. Kowalski (2012) notes that the specific contribution of each stakeholder to managing educational institutions is unique and complementary. Kowalski (as cited in Amakyi, 2017) identifies the school governing board as one of the key stakeholder groups in the management of educational institutions, in addition to the government directorates of education and the school community (e.g., parents or guardians). In managing educational institutions, the school governing board plays a key role in supporting the school head in the provision of quality education.

The school governing board in the management of education is a structure that upholds the tenets of representative democracy. The governing board with a composition of varied stakeholder

groups provides a forum for the school public and the citizenry to participate in the delivery of education. Berry and Howell (2005) opine that the institution of the school board gives voice to the school public in participating in the delivering of public education. Public schools are funded from the public trust and the governing board setup allows for increase citizen participation and a means to hold schools accountable. According to Campbell and Greene (as cited in Kowalski, 2012), the governing board is to ensure proper management control through the school head in making key decisions about the school in four broad areas of (a) establishing a long-term vision for the school, (b) adopting policies to create a climate that promotes excellence, (c) introducing systems to assure accountability for student learning outcomes, and (d) serving as advocates to canvass for support for public education. The school board is to support the school head to provide the best possible education and educational opportunities for all learners by setting the strategic direction for the school.

School boards exist to serve an essential function of running schools. Delagardelle (2008) describes in broad terms the supportive role of school boards to be centred on guiding student learning through the setting of vision and strategic direction for the school, creating policies, allocating resources, and monitoring academic achievement initiatives. Amakyi (2017) posits that the school board carries out certain functions that involves setting the school's vision and aims, establishing and maintaining the school's culture of learning, creating the school's plans and policies, monitoring and evaluating school performance, and promoting self evaluation to sustain school improvement.

The school board is expected to hold the school head and the management team accountable. According to Naik (2012), the accountability role of the school board is expressed in three functions of ensuring that first, there is a clearly stated vision and an institutional culture to support the strategic direction of the school, second, there are unambiguous delineated tasks to be performed and adopted rubrics to perform the tasks, and third, there are financial management practices adopted to guide the financial operations of the school to assure financial stewardship. The school board has an important strategic role to play in the management of the school. This strategic role of the school board revolves around playing a supportive role to help the school head and staff in the provision of quality education and holding the school management team accountable for performance. Carver (2006) acknowledges that school board members do not directly educate students, but they do govern the entire process, and do influence the results of this process. Carver intimates that school boards can increase school performance by focusing on setting broad policy goals, establishing clear expectations for staff, and holding staff accountable for performance. Ranson (2011) is of the opinion that school boards exist to assure the quality of school leadership by providing strategy, scrutiny, and improving the working structures of the school towards improved learning environment towards high student academic achievement. The role of school boards, if they are to be appreciated must be seen in terms of maximizing the student achievement levels in the schools (Wilkinson & Long, 2019).

Members of the school board, selected from various representative groups are entreated to act as trustees, functioning as impartial professionals to carry out policies and set directions for schools (Amakyi, 2017). Even though, membership to the board are drawn from various stakeholder groups, board members are to set aside parochial interests groups may have and pursue only the interests of the school. In other words, board members are implored function as trustees and not as delegates. When board members act as delegates, they feel obliged to protect their personal interests and the interests of the group they represent on the board. On the other hand, when board members act as trustees, they tend to serve the broad interests of the school (Mountford, 2004). Kowalski (2012) posits that when board members act as trustees, they understand their basic role and responsibilities,

act professionally and with integrity and protect the confidential nature of school business, work as a team, commit the necessary time and effort, and focus their attention on serving the learners. From the position of being a trustee, board members ensure that they do not use their membership on the board for personal gains. Kowalski (2012) further points out that board members declare all potential conflicts of interest in the discharge of their duties. Board members bring their experience, life skills, and common sense to this task. In everything they do, they aim to raise expectations of what can be achieved by all pupils and strengthen the involvement of parents and the community.

The Pre-Tertiary Education Act, 2020 (Act 1049) of Ghana mandates the Ghana Education Service to establish a board of governors for the management of public senior high school. The Act stipulates that the board shall ensure the proper and effective management of a secondary school. The school is run under the advisory guidance of the board of governors which represents the Government of Ghana and advises the school administration on behalf of the Government. The membership of the school board is drawn from varied stakeholder groups. The membership shall ordinarily consist of (a) a chairperson nominated by the Minister in consultation with the Education Service; (b) one representative each of (i) the Ministry responsible for Education; (ii) the Education Service; (iii) the Regional Coordinating Council; (iv) the District Assembly preferably the District Officer in charge of Education within whose jurisdiction the secondary school is located; (v) the Parent-Teacher Association of the secondary school; (vi) the traditional authorities of the area within which the secondary school is located; (vii) the teaching staff of the secondary school; (viii) the non-teaching staff of the secondary school; (ix) the Old Students Association of the secondary school; (x) the headmaster or headmistress of the secondary school; and (c) in the case of a secondary school established by a religious body, non-governmental organisation, civil society organisation or any other person, there shall be two representatives of that body.

The setup of the school board in Ghana suggests that the board is modeled on the stakeholder model of selecting school board members as opposed to the skill-based model. According to Connolly, Farrell, and James (2017), with the stakeholder model, various groups are specifically invited to be represented on the school board. James and Sheppard (2014) while acknowledging that this model promotes transparency and upholds democratic participation, may suffer from not benefiting from not getting an assembly of best expertise. The focus is not on a person being selected based on skills or expertise, but rather because the person belongs to a particular stakeholder group. Connolly, Farrell, and James (2017) intimate that in the skills-based model of selecting school board members, the skills or expertise of persons are considered as basis for selection. School board members are selected based on the skills or expertise they possess. There is depth of expertise to tap into, however, the composition of the board may suffer from absence of broad stakeholder representation and transparency (James & Sheppard, 2014).

Haikio (2012) posits based on how the board members are selected, the board promotes accountability or legitimacy. The former is promoted because there is broad representation by various stakeholder groups. The latter is promoted because members have the skills to be able to effectively lead the school. The training provided to board members can hone their skills and promote the legitimacy of governance through developing a sense of shared responsibility for the whole school. It is possible to achieve both accountability and legitimacy with the school board (Haikio, 2012).

2.0 Problem Statement and Purpose of Study

Institutions are trying to recover from the devastating effect of covid-19 pandemic that included a disruption of regular calendar and inability to meet targets set in their strategic plans. Institutions are taking decisions to restore to normalcy their operations. Senior high schools were

forced to close down during the pandemic and the school calendar had to change. For example, a new academic calendar has been introduced. The academic calendar that usually commences in September is rather being run concurrently with the calendar year and the period for conducting the standardized examinations, WASCCE, has shifted from June to September. Attempts at restoring the operations of the senior high schools to pre covid-19 era have called for decisions directed at interventions that put in place measures to create normal learning environment for students. The normative role of school boards behooves on them to assume vanguard position in taking decisions to restore the academic year to normalcy. However, there seems to be a new order emerging when it comes to decisions concerning the smooth running of senior high schools. Decisions are being taken at the national level, including even dates for re-opening of schools and when daily classes should begin. For example, the official press release of the Ghana Education Service reads: *according to the Ghana Education Service, senior high school (SHS 3) and (SHS 2) students across the country will officially re-open on 7th February 2022 while senior high school (SHS 1) students will re-open on 4th April 2022 to begin academic activities.* In the preparation of students for the standardized examinations, the school boards are again left in the dark. Decisions that impact the preparation of students are taken with no involvement of the school board. *The Ghana Education Service has procured 400,000 sets of sets of questions and answer booklets from WAEC for distribution to the first batch of beneficiary students of the free SHS policy. According to the head of Public Affairs of the Ministry of Education, the procurement of past questions is to guide students in their preparations for the examinations.* This trend of affairs is calling into question the role of the school board in providing support in the management of schools. School boards that are to be held accountable for what goes on in the schools, are not playing any significant roles in decisions to run the school. The question that needs to be addressed is: *do the school boards have any role to play in the management of senior high schools? Is the Ghana Education Service and the education directorates leveraging on the school boards to take decisions to manage the schools?* Members of the school board need to have clarity on their role and responsibilities and the expectations they are to meet as board members. The prevailing situation with regard to decisions affecting the running of senior high schools is not consistent with the normative role and functions prescribed in the Pre-Tertiary Act, 2020 (Act 1049) for school boards. The school board is charged with the mandate to ensure the proper and effective management of senior high schools and are held accountable for their stewardship in terms of decisions they take. This condition is unlikely to change unless more is known about the how school boards are fulfilling their mandates.

This study was to examine the perceptions of school board members in public senior high schools in Cape Coast in terms of their role and readiness to carry out their fiducial responsibility in the management of senior high schools. The study was framed by two research questions:

1. How do school board members perceive their readiness to serve on the school board?
2. How do school board members perceive their role of supporting the management of senior high schools?

Data about the extent to which school board members of senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis are effectively performing their roles and carrying out their responsibilities will provide information to ascertain whether school boards are properly positioned to carry out their entrusted mandates.

3.0 Research Methods

A qualitative research design, adopting the phenomenological study to understand a phenomenon and the perspectives of the people involved and how they construct their worlds and the meaning they attribute to their experiences, was conducted to gather data from chairpersons of

school boards of senior high schools ($n= 8$) in the Cape Coast metropolis. The defining characteristic of phenomenological research adopted for this study is its focus on describing the essence of a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2019), that is, school board operations from the perspectives of those who have experienced it.

The chairpersons were purposively selected as they were deemed to be adequately versed in the operations of the school board. All the eight schools selected have school boards that are functional. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the chairpersons of the school boards of the selected senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis. The chairpersons contacted and suitable days were scheduled for the interviews and each interview session lasted for about 40 minutes. The conduct of the interview utilized the topical protocol approach where a general list of topics of interest were used as a framework for discussions. This protocol offered the opportunity for immediate clarification and further elaboration and probing such that as new findings emerged, the researcher was able to pursue those lines of inquiry. The interview protocol consisted of seven main open-ended questions that addressed issues on the functions of the school board: selection of board members, orientation and preparation of board members, collegiality and team building among board members, role of board, scope of decisions and decision making processes, and relationship with school heads and education directorates. Additional topics which emerged as a result of follow-up and probing questions also were addressed. The additional topics mainly were to elicit clarification on what had earlier been said by the chairpersons or have the chairpersons further expand on an issue that had earlier been addressed.

The interview data were analyzed using the methodological schema of description-reduction-horizontalization-interpretation that enabled the grouping of recurring themes. The data were transcribed and coded and the codes with significant similarities were categorized to form sub-themes. The sub-themes were further reviewed such that interrelated sub-themes were grouped together to form broader themes which were relevant to the research questions of the study. The recurring themes were grouped under (a) readiness of persons to assume school board duties and (b) role of the school board. Credibility and dependability were assured through member checks; the chairpersons were asked to comment on the interpretation of the data collected and as to whether the findings were plausible based on the data collected.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

4.1 Readiness of Persons to Assume School Board Duties

Findings relating to readiness of persons to assume school board duties focused on issues pertaining to the selection of board members, orientation of board members, training and ongoing capacity building for board members.

4.1.1 Selection of Board Members

On the selection of board members, the study informants indicated that board members are selected through appointment and not through elections. The board members come from various defined groups that the Pre-Tertiary Act (2020) prescribes.

A participant indicated:

the board has no input as to who serves on it. We know the designated groups that are supposed to send one or two persons to serve on the board. The board works with representatives that groups send to us.

Commenting on the selection of board members, a participant alluded to the absence of stipulated academic and professional qualification to enable one to serve on the board:

there is no specified minimum academic requirement needed to serve on the

board. Groups nominate persons they believe can carry out board duties.

Should there be a minimum academic and professional requirements? I don't know.

A further probe on whether there should be a minimum academic and professional requirements set for board membership elicited the following responses from a study participant:

If board members are expected to assist the school head to manage and administer the affairs of the school, then they should have a broader understanding of school operations and should be abreast of management practices. It is obvious then that board members should have a minimum of post-secondary education.

A participant argued that:

the school head the board members are advising has a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Actually, a good number of them have masters degree. It is important for board members to come with equivalent degrees so that there can be meaningful discussions and engagements would be at the same level. The board members should come with suitable knowledge and skills. It won't be good for the board when there is a gap in understanding and comprehending what the other is saying. It is helpful to have persons with the commitment and ready to serve, but these are not sufficient. We need persons with high academic and professional backgrounds to give rich inputs.

The participants placed emphasis on having board members with experience. They stressed on experience as key element required to serve on the board.

A participant gave his opinion:

a person selected to serve on the board should possess experience; has a track record of being an accomplished person in his or her profession. Our board has members with diverse experiences. This is good for the board. When there is an issue at stake we have members approaching it from different perspectives. This helps in finding the right solution.

4.1.2 Orientation of Board Members

On the orientation of board members, the study participants pointed out that they had no formal orientation programme. The participants indicated that as board members they started to carry out their duties immediately after the swearing-in ceremony.

A follow-up question on whether the absence of orientation programme adversely affected their work as board members, a participant commented that:

an orientation programme would have prepared us for our work as board members in terms of providing us with a clear understanding of the scope of our work. I have been called upon on numerous occasions as board chairperson to explain to members what we can do and what we cannot do. I believe an orientation session would have dealt with such issues and we would not have faced such situations. Those situations often times created tension.

Another participant also shared that:

the absence of orientation programme has been problematic. First-time members on the board are at a loss as to the issues the board should address. I am in my second term so I understand the issues for school management and issues for the board. For example, during one of our meetings after the school head had presented a report, some of the board members wanted the board to get directly involved in resolving issues relating to individual teachers and have direct intervention in planning instructional models for teachers. I am strongly suggesting a retreat for orientation of the board members. Some tensions

at board meetings are avoidable if members know their scope of operations.

4.1.3 Training and Capacity Building of Board Members

A participant indicated that there was only on one occasion that the board members participated in a training programme and underwent capacity building on school-community engagement and also on grant writing. The remaining seven participants stated that they have not had any training and ongoing capacity building as board members.

All the participants expressed regret at the missed opportunities of the board in not having training and ongoing capacity building. The participants were of the opinion that training and capacity building will enhance their operations.

The readiness of board members to assume board duties was not clearly evidenced in this study findings in respect of the selection, orientation, training and capacity building of board members. The findings showed that the selection criteria were not clearly stated to include specified requirements that focused on the competences of board members to position them to be ready to assume board duties. However, experience, seen in terms of accomplishment in one's profession and a criterion for board membership was emphasized as critical in being ready to assume board duties. This finding is consistent with the postulates of Kowalski (2012) that board members with varied experiences are able to frame correctly problems of practice and proffer solutions to situations that defy textbook solutions.

Also, the selection of board members through appointment is consistent with literature on selecting board members to reflect a broad representation of the community. The broad representation enables the community members to bring a particular skill to serve the school board. The practice of appointing board members to serve has the advantage of eradicating situations where interested persons desiring to serve on the board would campaign on parochial issues to be elected (Amakyi, 2017; Kowalski, 2006; Plough, 2014).

The findings that school board members are not given orientation as well as training and capacity building are at variance with best practices in school governance. For example, Plough (2014) is of the opinion that board members should be oriented and provided with opportunities for ongoing training on contemporary school administration to build their capacity to provide assistance to school heads. Plough's opinion is shared by Dervarics and O'Brien (2019) who identify eight characteristics essential to school board operations and suggest their adoption for effective school board operations. According to Dervarics and O'Brien, the eight characteristics can be adopted through learning.

4.2 Role of the School Board

Findings on the role of the school board focused on three subthemes of role conceptualization, exercise of power, and decisions of the board.

4.2.1 Role Conceptualization

The findings showed that even though the members of the school board are appointed by different stakeholder groups, the participants indicated that they function with the philosophy of being trustees, that is, pursuing the broader interests of the school as opposed to being delegates, that is, pursuing the interests of the stakeholder groups they represent. The participants perceived their role as creating awareness and connecting and networking with the school public and stakeholders to gain resources towards improved student achievement. A participant stated that:

I see my role on the board as serving the interests of the children and so

I want to be a part of the educational plan for the children. I participate fully at meetings and pay particular attention to decisions the board is taking to ensure they are what is best for the children.

Another participant intimated that:

when I sit at board meetings, I do not see myself as taking decisions to seek the interests of the group I represent. It is true the group brought me here to serve on the board, but I am here to serve the interests of the school. I am act rationally, professionally, and with integrity to pursue the goals of the school.

My commitment is to the school and not to any particular group.

These sentiments were expressed by all the other participants that their decisions do not reflect personal and special interest group concerns. The board members perceive their role as serving the interest of the school.

4.2.2 Exercise of Power

The findings showed that school board members exercised power through team work. The participants indicated that as individuals, they have no legitimate power to take decisions, but acting together as a board, they are able to take decisions concerning the school. The participants noted that the emphasis on team decisions has helped to prevent any individual board member from acting unilaterally. The participants also indicated that their exercise of power is guided by the philosophy of directed autonomy, where broad educational goals are set by the government and they exercise power within the broad goals to take decisions.

A participant shared:

I acknowledge that when it comes to us exercising power, we do so within a boundary set by the government. As a board we limited in what we can do. We do not have power to act and take certain decisions such as appointing the school head or terminating the school head's appointment. We exercise our power to hold the school head accountable in implementing the school's strategic plans. We also exercise power in ratifying decisions of the school's disciplinary committee when they apply the school rules.

A participant expressed disappointment in the increasing limitations placed on the board in the exercise of power. According to the participant:

there is much talk about decentralization which promotes increasing flexibility where school boards are able to guide schools to respond more quickly and directly to emerging needs in the school. Yet, in the exercise of power, school boards are not able to respond to needs in the school without permission from education headquarters, even in simple situations as raising funds to fix broken items or to purchase items to support the smooth running of the school. It seems to me the board has no power to act, but only operating to affirm decisions already taken.

Another participant expressed similar sentiments:

decentralisation and school autonomy is supposed to grant important powers to school boards, but this is not the case with our boards. We have not been granted the power to do our work. We operate in a centralized system.

4.2.3 Decisions of Board

The findings revealed that board members perceived their decisions to be centred on the improvement of student achievement. Participants indicated that the school board discusses variety

of topics related to student achievement. The participants further indicated that decisions of the board are focused on setting a vision for continuous improvement in student achievement and on coordinating policies and practices to support the school head to attain the vision.

A participant commenting on the focus of decisions of the school board opined that:

the decisions of the board are directed towards supporting the school to create an enabling environment for learning to take place. In our decisions, we work with policies to establish a structure that has positive influence on instructional practices and the culture of learning. Our decisions focus on broad activities to attend to students' learning needs and issues without interfering in the school head's daily management duties.

Another participant sharing his views on the focus of board decisions stated:

our decisions are generally intended to create the right conditions for school work to take place. We take decisions that address how the school can have the needed resources. We decide on how to connect the school to persons who can assist the school. Our decisions also put in place structures to hold the system accountable to high academic standards.

The participants also revealed that even though they are aware of the focus of the decisions they take and are satisfied with the decisions the school board makes, the board members feel that the directorates of Ghana Education Service increasingly assuming control of decisions that should be taken by the board has made the decision-making process by the board much more difficult. The participants perceived the increased control of the directorates in taking decisions as a major factor causing the board members to become apathetic in their decision-making role.

A participant expressed frustration and said:

the directorates of education in partnership with the government have assumed a posture of taking all decisions without any form of consultation with the school board. Some of us feel that such actions give a hint that the Ghana Education Service management at the headquarters do not want the school boards to function. It is as if they don't want us to serve, because their actions have made us redundant.

A participant also pouring out her frustrations about how directorates of education take decisions that the board should be making, stated that:

as board members, we are concerned about our effectiveness. We have been sworn in as board to take certain decisions and make strategic choices for the well-being of the school. We cannot function well if the government and the education directorates believe they are the ones to take all the decisions concerning the school. Often times I am not sure of our decision-making role.

A participant argued that:

in my opinion, the government and the directors of education should allow the board to carry out its functions and take decisions to support the school head in running the school. As a board, in supporting the school head, we will hold the head accountable in the extent to which the head has attained the vision and the goals of the school. I believe that since each school has its unique vision, we should be allowed as a board to assume decision-making role and take decisions that will lead the school to attain its vision.

This study finding showing that the board members perceive their role conceptualization as trustees is consistent with the works of various authors (e.g., Amakyi, 2017; Kowalski, 2012; Mountford, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2006). For example, Kowalski (2012) describes board members who function as trustees to be persons who pursue the primacy of the school's interests. Such board members act professionally and with integrity. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2006) identify the role conceptualization of trusteeship as essential to the functions of the board in working together as a team to establish a vision, goals, allocate resources, and create conditions for learning to take place. Amakyi (2017) posits that board members functioning as trustees is the preferred paradigm to promote collegiality and achieve singleness of purpose towards high student achievement and school improvement.

Also, the study finding that board members perceive their role to include exercise of power that is not unbridled is consistent with the works of Fullan (2003), Fullan and Hargreaves (2016), Mountford (2008) and Plough (2014) who postulate that in setting strategic directions for the school, authority, that is legitimate power, is shared among school board members and administrators at the education directorates. Fullan (2003) argues that authority is shared in view of the fact that both centralization, which shifts power away from school board, and decentralization, which reposes power in the school board, are not rigorously pursued to the exclusion of the other. Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) are of the opinion that authority is shared and is fluid. Authority shifts more towards school board in school situations demanding urgent actions towards school improvement. On the other hand, authority shifts away from school board in school situations that demand for compliance with policy directives.

Again, the study finding that board members have a clear perception that the decisions of the board are focused on student achievement is supported by the research of Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) and Plough (2014). Plough draws the conclusion that effective board decisions are in the domain of strengthening student academic achievements.

The study finding that shows that government and education directorates take decisions without consultation with the school board is not congruent with the best practices in school administration as postulated by Kowalski (2012), Fullan and Hargreaves (2016), and Gawlik and Allen (2019). The authors promote collaborative leadership practices in schools and recognize that school board members are professionals and should be treated as such.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings reported in the study, the study concludes that school boards have relevance in the management of senior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis. The mode of selecting members for the school boards through appointments by various groups presents opportunity for broader stakeholder participation in the management of senior high schools. Members of the school board function as trustees as they carry out their duties and work as a team to exercise power in taking decisions that are primarily focused on student academic achievement and school improvement.

The following recommendations for practice and future research are offered based on the findings and conclusions of the study. The Ghana Education Service and the education directorates should ensure that school boards organize orientation and continuous professional development and capacity building programmes for its members to increase their readiness to function on the school board. The study further recommends that the Ghana Education Service and the education directorates strengthen communication with school boards and engage them in consequential decisions for the schools.

This study adopted the phenomenological approach and was delimited to the Cape Coast metropolis. A regression study could be conducted in other school districts and metropolis to ascertain the influence of school board decisions on student academic achievement.

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